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ABSTRACT

This manual describes a system for assessing training readiness of state National Project on Career Education (NPCE) trainers who will deliver inservice training to educators of the deaf in career education and planning skills. Each of three sections offers an explanation and concrete scenario for one of the three skill areas included on the NPCE-developed self-rating scale trainers use after participation in career education inservice workshops. These skill areas are platform skills (voice/signing, dress, visuals and other media, interpreter use, confidence), style skills (mannerisms, flexibility, enthusiasm, timing, and audience rapport), and processing skills (articulation, wait-time, praise rejection, building, audience questions, conflict or communicative blocks). (Processing involves a questioning strategy.) The rating scale is appended. (YLB)

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TRAINING SKILLS

National Project on Career Education

Training Skills: A Rating Scale

By
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October 1981

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National Project on Career Education

Introduction

The inservice training of educators of the deaf in career education and planning skills has been the primary focus of the National Project on Career Education (NPCE) since it was established in 1978 by the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID). Because MSSD and NTID could not handle the many requests for assistance in providing inservice training from schools and programs for the deaf across the United States, the NPCE objective was defined as follows:

> Each state will have a model career education (CE) program and a cadre of career education facilitors who can consult with and train the personnel in other schools serving hearing impaired students to a) develop and implement plans for a comprehensive K-12 CE program, and b) infuse CE concepts into the school curriculum. (Young, 1980)

The skills needed to be a career education consultant and trainer were packaged into the "Delivery Skills Workshop" (Egelston-Dodd and Trost, 1979)

which was presented in eight regional workshops to 60 teams of facilitators from 42 states during the falls of 1979 and 1980. The content and format were well received by the participants (Young, 1980). Many participants have, however expressed a need for more instruction in the actual behaviors used in workshop delivery and for feedback on their performance before taking on the highly visible role of NPCE state trainer.

In preparing to deliver inservice training, an array of skills must be mastered to ensure the success of an intensive workshop. The novice trainer should be able to obtain practice in a rehearsal situation using training teammates as an audience. A trainer with more experience may still wish to start with a small group of teachers in the local school before stepping into a highly visible training and consulting role for outside school districts.

An outline for the system for assessing training readiness described in this manual appears in the appendix. The skills are derived from the "Delivery Skills Workshop" (Egelston-Dodd and Trost, 1979) and are based on researched variables related to the professional development of adult learners.

Research on training effectiveness does not prescribe a unique set of items to measure quality. There is a very small number of items that

correlate highly with achievement, and, because they are so few, they cannot provide a complete picture (Gephart, 1980). Some of us would prefer to add, "concern for the individual" or "how the teacher is dressed." Although items like these are not supported by research, they may be included on the basis of our values. The knowledgeable use of value-based items will help individual educators improve their training skills.

The manual, Training Skills: A Rating Scale, was designed to be studied prior to the use of the NPCE-developed instrument for measuring training readiness. The need for this technical assistance component was revealed as participants in the NPCE regional workshops for CE facilitators expressed their anxiety and discomfort with their future role as trainers in the NPCE network. Not only were many of these experienced educators unaware of the principles of adult learning, but they were also reluctant to be observed and evaluated during the growth of their training skills. Thus, a self-rating scale was designed for their use.

The instrument, "Training Skills: A Rating Scale," has been validated in four career education inservice workshops with deaf and hearing participants. Generally, trainers' self-ratings improved in correspondence with improved performance. Observer ratings were consistently higher than self ratings, and no single category or item was found to produce an unduly high or low rating.

The ideal application of the instrument for self-improvement would be a micro-teaching type of setting with a videotape recording of a brief (8-10 minute) simulated or real training experience. Facilitators who want to practice could rotate from trainer to participant roles through one module and in an hour or two provide each member with an opportunity to "train" the rest of the team. Private viewing of a trainer's taped performance along with the use of the self-rating instrument may serve as valuable feedback for an individual.

The training scale ranges from a high of 5 on the positive end to a low of 1 at the negative end. Satisfactory ratings would include the 4-5 range, with 3 representing some evidence of behaviors from each end of the scale.

While the instrument was designed as a self-evaluation, an alternative use is asking a training partner to apply the rating during a live training session. It is important to select someone whose judgment is respected and who can deliver both praise and criticism in a realistic, empathic fashion. Such an approach should provide useful feedback for self-improvement of training skills.

The following sections in this manual will cover an explanation and concrete scenario for the three skill areas: platform skills, style skills and processing skills.

Platform Skills

Voice/Signing	Choppy signs, inaudible or unpleasant voice	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Pleasant voice, clear signs
Dress	Distracting, inappropriate	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate dress
Visuals and other media	Unable to use media equipment	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Technically skilled with equipment
Interpreter use	Unappreciative, too fast / too slow	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Courteous, appropriate speed
Confidence	Nervous, hesitant	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Poised, self-confident

Successful delivery to an inservice workshop audience requires the trainer to communicate content effectively. Attention to several areas will facilitate communication from the "platform" of the podium, lecturn, or trainer's table to a mixed audience of deaf and hearing participants.

An audible, pleasant voice and clear signs are essential for any communication in a workshop setting. For a typical audience of thirty or fewer participants, a microphone should not be needed to project the trainer's speaking voice. For best viewing of signs, the trainer may need to stand in front of or beside the table or lecturn.

The trainer's clothing should be comfortably professional and of an appropriate color and pattern as a background for signing. Shoes with heels so high that they interfere with the trainer's comfortable standing for as long

as 45 minutes are inappropriate. Also to be avoided are dark, tight-fitting shirts or blouses on which nervous perspiration may be visible. Generally, personal preference should be indulged for comfort and professional attractiveness.

Communicating most effectively with the participants in the audience, especially those who are deaf, requires frequent and effective use of visual media. Knowing how to operate an overhead projector and how to display transparencies is a mandatory skill. Working with a cofacilitator and being sensitive to audience comfort with the visuals will assist a trainer in keeping material appropriately paced, in good focus, properly placed for best visibility, and synchronized with audio when necessary.

It is recommended that each trainer simultaneously sign for him or herself during the presentation to a mixed deaf and hearing audience; however, use of a professional interpreter is also appropriate. The deaf participants should be consulted as to their preference when possible. Sensitivity to the interpreter includes a proper introduction to the audience, sharing a print copy of a technical lecture or discussion prior to the workshop, and expressing thanks before the session adjourns. Special requests should be clarified with the interpreter ahead of time. For NPCE workshops involving a mixed group of deaf and hearing participants, it is recommended that the trainer point at the speaker and that the interpreter sign everything contributed from the audience during a discussion, even if participants are signing at the same time. Stating this policy at the beginning of the workshop and reinforcing it, if necessary, will provide an atmosphere for total communication. The trainer must be alert to the interpreter's feelings regarding this policy and reassure, if necessary, that the practice has been successfully used in a number of workshops.

A poised, confident trainer will communicate more effectively than one whose stage fright causes shaking hands and/or a quavering voice. Thorough preparation generally results in a strong self-confidence and a smooth presentation. There are breathing exercises and other simple techniques to help overcome moderate stage fright (Linver, 1978). A trainer who feels more serious anxiety than mild "butterflies" may wish to opt for a cofacilitator role.

The optimum behaviors for a skilled trainer training in a lecture or discussion format are described below:

> Standing beside the overhead projector which rests at the end of the training table, the trainer makes several points, revealing the appropriate print and graphics on the overhead transparency as the presentation continues. The trainer's signs are crisp and nearly simultaneous with the low-pitched, vibrant voice of the reverse interpreter who is voicing for him. As a new transparency is placed on the projector, the trainer checks it quickly for focus and placement and allows the audience time to read it before beginning to sign. The trainer's clothes are loose and comfortable, solid colored, and professionally collegiate. The trainer uses eye contact to assure that the media, signing and voice of the interpreter are correctly adjusted for the audience. The discussion and following lecturette move decisively and at the control of the trainer who casually refers to the trainer's narrative and to the clock several times during the session. Near the end of the session and still standing after having moved around to the front of the table several times, the trainer checks with the cofacilitator to see if anything else needs to be added and then adjourns the session.

Style Skills

Mannerisms	Annoying or unusual posture or behavior	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate behavior
Flexibility	Unable to adapt to schedule or content needs	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Willing and able to change plans
Enthusiasm	Unpleasant facial expression, low energy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Energetic, fun
Timing	Skips over important issues, belabors the obvious	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate timing
Audience Rapport	Insensitive, unfriendly	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Friendly, encouraging, sense of humor

The trainer's style may influence the success of a workshop, many times without the trainer even being aware of the impact s/he has created. Attention to style can improve performance despite the belief of some inservice experts that the skills covered under style may be more an "art," i.e., the result of a natural bent for working with an audience. Mannerisms such as a repetitive phrase or strange posture may be noted by a cofacilitator who has been asked to be alert to such things. A hunched shoulder may be relaxed with a more comfortable standing position. Those who fix their eyes on one spot too often or too long should be reminded to direct eye movement among the audience. Other habits or annoying mannerisms may be difficult to eradicate. Head scratching (caused by nervousness?), swaying on one's feet (caused by nervousness?), or nervous laughter (caused by nervousness!) are common

problems which trainers have been able to improve using the rating scale and feedback discussions with cofacilitators. Working out a schedule of behavior modification with a cofacilitator may assist the trainer to adopt more appropriate behavior.

Flexibility is necessary for both planning and executing any training. Differences among audiences, time crunches created by previous events not being kept on schedule, and/or missing media all can create a need for last-minute changes. Not only should the trainer be able to change, but the reason for and impact of the deletions or additions should not deliberately be made obvious to the audience. Defensive discounting of responsibility for a damaged performance only creates a credibility gap with most audiences. It is better to use a good humored approach to necessary changes without expressing blame publicly. The trainer's feelings about the negative impact of the changes can be expressed during the trainer debriefing time.

Enthusiasm may be the most important ingredient for delivering an inservice program. A charismatic leader can motivate participants to gain new knowledge and achieve a positive attitude toward an innovation such as career education. A trainer's body language and facial expression should connote high energy and a positive attitude. The intensive training session should be enjoyable and fun. The trainer needs to beware of being perceived as a "cheerleader," however, and should draw on a variety of behaviors to match the design of each strategy.

The timing aspects of style are to be distinguished from the timing concerns related to flexibility of schedule. It is assumed that a trainer will adhere to an assigned timeframe for a presentation. It is virtually unforgivable to usurp another trainer's time or to hold an audience past the

scheduled time for adjournment. A timely start will usually eliminate such problems.

Of greater significance to style is the trainer's sense of timing during a lecture, discussion, and/or experiential strategy. To drag out a topic, belaboring the obvious or to rush through highly fascinating content spoils the impact of a tightly controlled workshop design. Thorough preparation and intimate knowledge of the content combined with experience with the strategies will usually improve the trainer's timing/style problems.

Rapport with the audience is related to all of the style skills. It can be identified by watching audience response. Participants can be observed to be "tuned in" to a trainer who peppers the presentation with encouraging comments, evidence of humor and an open, sharing and sensitive style. A trainer's body language may contribute to rapport, but it is especially the accepting attitude of the trainer which will impact the most. A trainer who refuses to allow participants to interrupt with questions when information is needed or who makes critical comments about other trainers or the audience will not find it easy to establish a smooth rapport with the group. Use of first names of participants and trainers is highly recommended unless they have expressed a different preference. Name tags should be constructed with the first names in larger print for better visibility and emphasis. The trainer should attempt to memorize names and faces and, if possible, some personal or professional information about each participant. During experiential activities, the audience should be encouraged to mix with people they don't know. Every exercise requiring a partner or small groups of a specified number should be supervised to be sure no one is left out. The trainer and cofacilitators should all be ready to assume the role of a participant to help fill groups needing an additional member.

The scenario to be observed for such style behaviors might include the following:

The trainer begins the session with an ice breaker using a humorous story or anecdote which can be specifically related to the content s/he is about to present. The audience "warms up" and settles back expectantly. The trainer begins the session with a small group activity and watches attentively while the participants move to join their chosen group. Any stragglers are encouraged individually to join in. The trainer oversees the audience and notes that one group will finish later than the others. The others are encouraged to break for coffee or to continue their discussion informally while the last group finishes. Everyone assembles back in the large group, while the trainer adjusts the discussion questions to balance for the lack of time created by the extra time extension for the small group work. The trainer smiles and shows no resentment over the adjusted schedule. A few discussion questions are presented with moderate audience response. The trainer adds some relevant comments based on information overheard during the small group discussion. Several participants from that group are drawn into the discussion making insightful and highly relevant comments, which touch on part of the lecturette the trainer had planned to move into. Building on the comments and without repeating what participants have already covered themselves, the trainer makes a smooth transition from the discussion into the lecturette. A question from the audience is redirected to the group stimulating sharing of relevant information by about 90% of the participants. This takes the session to adjournment time. The trainer expresses appreciation for the excellent discussion, summarizes one or two main points using a point of humor, and turns the floor over to the next presenter.

Processing Skills

Articulation	Rephrases questions several times	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Concise, clear statement of question
Wait-time	Less than two seconds	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Three seconds or more
Praise/Rejection	Inappropriate response to answers	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate praise, gentle rejection
Building (reflecting, clarification)	Goes from response immediately to new idea	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Restates response or probes
Audience questions	Unable to answer or redirect questions	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Comfortable answer or redirection of question
Conflict or communicative blocks	Antagonizes or instigates blocks	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Resolves and facilitates progress

The success of an experiential workshop format depends upon the skill of the trainer to connect the participants' experiences to the concepts to be learned via an analytical technique called "processing". Processing involves a questioning strategy, bringing into play all the factors involved in asking the right questions, in the correct sequence, waiting for participants to mentally process the question, and reacting to the variety of answers one receives. Articulation of a question must be clear and concise, without rephrasing which may be confusing to participants. Generally, questions used immediately after an experiential strategy should be divergent, allowing participants to relate their feelings about the experience. Successive questions should become more convergent, leading the audience to the common generality or theme which serves as the conceptual base of the session.

Wait-time refers to both the time after a question is asked and the time immediately after the participant contributes an answer. As an achievement-related variable, wait-time has stimulated a considerable amount of research which applies to inservice training as much as to classroom situations. Not only does the quality of responses increase with a delayed wait-time, but participation of a greater proportion of the audience is enhanced. The skill seems straight forward and easily mastered until a trainer is actually evaluated and finds that typically one second is all that's allowed. With practice, a wait time of 3 seconds or more will become second nature.

The way a trainer responds to a participant's contributions also impacts on achievement and attitudes in a workshop. Research has shown that praising an answer may inhibit participant response, perhaps by establishing an expectation of right or wrong answers. A preferable trainer response to a participant's answer is simple acceptance. An incorrect answer to a convergent question or an answer with which the trainer disagrees may be rejected in a sensitive way which still shows respect for the contributor. Frequently, other participants may have conflicting opinions which they'll share in an atmosphere of respect. Ultimately, the trainer should be willing to make known his/her views.

When responding to a participant answer, the trainer should be able to build on it, thus letting the contributer know that the answer has value. Even more flattering than praise after a good answer is to have the trainer develop a whole new train of concepts based on and referred back to "So and So's" idea. The reflection, clarification, and probing of an answer also help build ego investment for the contributor and concepts for other participants.

In the lively interaction generated by processing an experiential strategy, participants may generate their own questions addressed to the trainer.

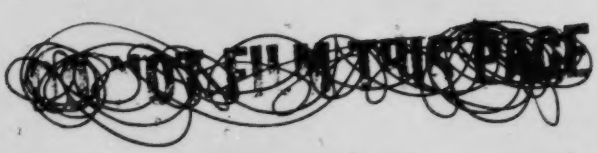
Other than simply offering a direct response, the trainer may choose to present the question for discussion among participants, especially if it is divergent in nature. This strategy keeps everyone involved and avoids the risk of developing a one-to-one conversation with a single participant in the middle of the workshop.

When a conflict arises or when one or more participants disrupt the workshop discussion, the trainer must strive to resolve the blocks and facilitate progress. Challenging the disruptive people will often antagonize them more and turn off other cooperative participants. Acceptance of conflict as a healthy component of human interaction is never easy, but is an essential trainer skill. Finding a workable compromise, using authority, or simply setting aside the conflict for future discussion may work in many conflict situations. Everyone has a unique conflict management style and knowing what works in certain situations and mastering a repertoire of alternatives should serve a trainer in a conflict situation during a workshop.

The inservice training behaviors which might demonstrate an optimum application of processing skills might proceed as follows:

> The audience has just reassembled into a large group after an experiential strategy. The trainer obtains their attention and asks how they liked the strategy. A variety of responses are generated while the trainer nods affirmatively and points from speaker to speaker, occasionally accepting a comment with a response such as "That's interesting," or "I'm surprised." The next few questions guide participants to the connection between their experience and the learning to be derived from it. After starting a question, the trainer waits a bit, looking with close eye contact for a signal that someone is ready to respond, i.e., a raised index finger, a quizzical look, a nod or smile. Calling out the participant's first name and pointing at the contributer during the entire time s/he is talking, the trainer then waits a bit after the response. Frequently participants pause, then continue talking with greater insight. A participant expresses a contrary point of information, and the trainer asks the group members if they agree. A lively discussion ensues which the trainer suggests may be continued after the session, expressing at the same time some ambivalence and regret at cutting off discussion. Using the opposing opinions as a base, the trainer

moves into discussion of the next concept, referring back to the individual contributor's comments. A participant asks a question out of context, and the trainer answers it briefly and directly, but moves immediately back to the topic. By the end of the processing session a web of questions and responses has been spun to tie the experiential strategy to the new concepts.



National Project on Career Education

Summary

The utility of the rating scale for self-instruction and feedback for training readiness was validated by the NPCE national training team. The form requires less than five minutes as a post-training critique. It allows documentation of the valued behaviors of a good trainer as well as the mastery of skills necessary for successfully training an audience of mixed deaf and hearing participants. As more deaf employees and teachers are found in mainstream settings, their continued learning must be effectively provided for in a manner which doesn't impede the learning of hearing participants during staff development sessions. Trainers who use "Training Skills: A Rating Scale" developed by NPCE will be able to monitor improvement of their skills in the context of attending to the needs of both deaf and hearing people in their audience.

National Project on Career Education

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National Project on Career Education

Appendix

TRAINING SKILLS: A RATING SCALE

Directions: Working with a training partner or viewing a videotape of your training, rate yourself on each item by circling on the continuum provided the number closest to the description of the training behavior you observed.

		Continuum	
Platform Skills:			
1. Voice/Signing	Sloppy signs, inaudible or unpleasant voice	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Pleasant voice, clear signs
2. Dress	Distracting, inappropriate	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate dress
3. Visuals and other media	Unable to use media equipment	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Technically skilled with equipment
4. Interpreter use	Unappreciative, too fast / too slow	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Courteous, appropriate speed
5. Confidence	Nervous, hesitant	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Poised, self-confident
Style Skills:			
6. Mannerisms	Annoying or unusual posture or behavior	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate behavior
7. Flexibility	Unable to adapt to schedule or content needs	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Willing and able to change plans
8. Enthusiasm	Unpleasant facial expression, low energy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Energetic, fun
9. Timing	Skips over important issues, belabors the obvious	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate timing
10. Audience Rapport	Insensitive, unfriendly	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Friendly, encouraging, sense of humor
Processing Skills:			
11. Articulation	Rephrases questions several times	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Concise, clear statement of question
12. Wait-time	Less than two seconds	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Three seconds or more
13. Praise/Rejection	Inappropriate response to answers	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Appropriate praise, gentle rejection
14. Building (reflecting, clarification)	Goes from response immediately to new idea	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Restates response or probes
15. Audience questions	Unable to answer or redirect questions	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Comfortable answer or redirection of question
16. Conflict or communicative blocks	Antagonizes or instigates blocks	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	Resolves and facilitates progress

Training Skills: A Rating Scale
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